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**Government of the District of Columbia**



**Department of Human Services**

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Testimony of  
**Kate Jesberg**  
Interim Director

***"Homeless Shelter Monitoring Amendment Act of 2006;  
Emergency Assistance Amendment Act of 2006; and  
Homeless Services Reform Act Amendment Act of  
2006"***

Committee on Human Services  
Adrian Fenty, Chair  
Council of the District of Columbia

May 23, 2006

Room 412  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20004  
9:00 A.M.

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GOOD MORNING COUNCILMEMBER FENTY AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES. I AM KATE JESBERG, INTERIM DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES. THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TO DISCUSS PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE HOMELESS SERVICES REFORM ACT (HSRA). THE HSRA IS AN INVALUABLE PIECE OF LEGISLATION AND I THANK YOU FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP IN THE AREA OF HOMELESS SERVICES.

BEFORE DISCUSSING THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS, I WOULD LIKE TO MENTION SOME KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PROVISION OF HOMELESS SERVICES. FIRST, I AM PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE CHAIR OF THE INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS HAS ANNOUNCED THAT THE FIRST MEETING OF THE INTERAGENCY COUNCIL WILL BE JUNE 13, 2006. THE MEETING OF THIS BODY IS CRITICAL GIVEN THE NUMEROUS PRESSING ISSUES SURROUNDING HOMELESS SERVICES THAT ARE FACING THE CITY.

SINCE MY APPOINTMENT AS INTERIM DIRECTOR JUST TEN (10) WEEKS AGO, I HAVE DEDICATED THE MAJORITY OF MY TIME TO HOMELESS SERVICE ISSUES. I HAVE ATTENDED NUMEROUS MEETINGS WITH GOVERNMENT STAFF, SHELTER PROVIDERS, AND HOMELESS RESIDENTS IN AN EFFORT TO OBTAIN INFORMATION FROM THOSE AFFECTED BY AND DIRECTLY INVOLVED WITH THIS ISSUE, TO HEAR STAKEHOLDERS' CONCERNS, AND TO ASSESS THE DEPARTMENT'S PERFORMANCE. IN AN EFFORT TO FURTHER ENHANCE

COMMUNICATION REGARDING THE DEPARTMENT'S EFFORTS TO MEET THE EMERGENCY SHELTER NEEDS OF THE HOMELESS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, THE DEPARTMENT CONTRIBUTES TO A NEW COLUMN IN STREET SENSE, A NEWSPAPER BY AND FOR HOMELESS RESIDENTS OF THE DISTRICT, AUTHORED BY THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND ELDERS. ADDITIONALLY, I HAVE PERSONALLY ASSESSED THE DOWNTOWN AREA AND OTHER PARTS OF THE CITY IN AN EFFORT TO IDENTIFY POSSIBLE SHELTER LOCATIONS.

IN THIS SHORT TIME, DHS HAS MOVED FORWARD ON A NUMBER OF CRITICAL ISSUES. FIRST, TWO STEPS CRITICAL TO THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE LA CASA SHELTER HAVE BEEN COMPLETED. A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) IN SUPPORT OF THE RENOVATION OF THE SPRING ROAD IMMUNIZATION SITE HAS BEEN COMPLETED AND CONSTRUCTION WILL BEGIN IN JULY 2006. FURTHER, OUR ACCESS TO A LAND PARCEL WILL SOON BE FINALIZED. WITH THESE ALTERNATE SHELTER LOCATIONS SECURED TO HOUSE LA CASA RESIDENTS DURING CONSTRUCTION, WE ARE PLANNING FOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW LA CASA SHELTER TO BEGIN IN THE EARLY FALL.

DHS HAS ALSO INITIATED AN MOU WITH PARTNER AGENCIES TO PROVIDE WRAP-AROUND SERVICES AT 801 EAST. SERVICES ALREADY IN PLACE INCLUDE THOSE PROVIDED BY THE INCOME MAINTENANCE ADMINISTRATION (IMA), THE REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (RSA), THE DEPARTMENT OF

HEALTH, ADDICTION, PREVENTION AND RECOVERY ADMINISTRATION (APRA), AND THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH (DMH). ADDITIONALLY, WE ARE WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE OFFICE OF PROPERTY MANAGEMENT (OPM) AND THE D.C. HOUSING AUTHORITY ON THE REDESIGN OF THE GALES SCHOOL SHELTER. THE OPENING OF THIS FACILITY IS CURRENTLY PLANNED FOR THE FALL 2007. DHS HAS ALSO WORKED TO ADDRESS CONCERNS REGARDING THE LOCATION FOR THE FAMILY ASSESSMENT CENTER, INITIALLY PLANNED FOR D.C. VILLAGE. WE NOW PLAN TO OPEN THE FAMILY ASSESSMENT CENTER ON RHODE ISLAND AVENUE, NW, A LOCATION THAT IS ACCESSIBLE BY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.

THE TRANSITION OF THE EMERY SHELTER, FROM A LOW-BARRIER FACILITY TO A WORKING MAN'S SHELTER, CONTINUES WITH GREATER EFFORT TO PROVIDE MORE INDIVIDUALIZED ASSISTANCE TO RESIDENTS. DHS HAS DIRECTED ITS CONTRACTOR, THE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (TCP), TO CONDUCT ENHANCED ASSESSMENTS OF RESIDENTS OF EMERY UPON WHICH INDIVIDUALIZED SERVICE PLANS WILL BE DEVELOPED. THIS ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE IS DESIGNED TO MORE FULLY EXPLORE THEIR NEEDS AND IDENTIFY APPROPRIATE TRANSITION OPTIONS, AS NECESSARY. WE ANTICIPATE THAT THIS THOUGHTFUL, ORGANIZED APPROACH WILL FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF RESIDENTS, AS NECESSARY, BY JULY 2006.

ADDITIONALLY, DHS IS ACTIVELY ADDRESSING ISSUES RELATED TO COMPLIANCE WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA). STAFFS OF DHS, TCP, AND TCP'S SUBCONTRACTORS THAT OPERATE SHELTER FACILITIES HAVE ATTENDED TRAINING ON THE ADA SPONSORED BY THE OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS. FURTHER, DHS HAS REQUESTED FROM TCP A WRITTEN UPDATE REGARDING ITS EFFORTS TO FULLY COMPLY WITH THESE CRITICAL REQUIREMENTS. DHS IS WORKING ACTIVELY WITH OPM TO ENSURE THAT FACILITIES OWNED OR LEASED BY THE DISTRICT ARE ON OPM'S MASTER PROPERTY LIST FOR ADA COMPLIANCE REVIEWS. THROUGH THESE EFFORTS WITH TCP AND OPM, LINES OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR ADA-RELATED ISSUES HAVE BEEN CLEARLY ARTICULATED SO THAT ACTIONS CAN BE UNDERTAKEN BY THE APPROPRIATE ORGANIZATION.

FINALLY, DHS HAS ENHANCED ITS ON-GOING MONITORING OF HOMELESS SHELTER FACILITIES. I UNDERSTAND THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME CONFUSION REGARDING THE DEPARTMENT'S MONITORING EFFORTS. TO BE PERFECTLY CLEAR, DHS DOES MONITOR HOMELESS SHELTERS. IN FACT, THIS EFFORT PRECEDES THE EXECUTION OF THE CONTRACT WITH TCP, INCLUDING THE TIME WHEN TCP'S SERVICES WERE PROVIDED THROUGH A GRANT. OUR MONITORING EFFORTS HAVE EXPANDED IN RECENT MONTHS WITH THE REDIRECTION OF DEPARTMENTAL RESOURCES THROUGH THE DETAIL OF STAFF FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR AND THE ON-GOING DETAIL OF STAFF FROM THE ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES PROGRAM WITHIN THE FAMILY SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION. THESE EFFORTS WILL BE FURTHER ENHANCED BY THE ADDITIONAL POSITIONS THAT THIS COMMITTEE FUNDED IN SUPPORT OF HSRA IMPLEMENTATION IN FY07. THIS ACTIVE MONITORING EFFORT INCLUDES THE USE OF A STANDARD PROTOCOL WHICH GUIDES THE REVIEWS, DOCUMENTATION OF DEFICIENCIES WHEN IDENTIFIED, AND WRITTEN FOLLOW UP WITH TCP REGARDING THE NEED TO DEVELOP CORRECTIVE ACTION PLANS. ONCE DEFICIENCIES ARE IDENTIFIED AND COMMUNICATED TO TCP, OUR MONITORS FOLLOW UP TO ENSURE CORRECTIVE ACTIONS HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED. FAILURE TO TAKE CORRECTIVE ACTION RESULTS IN THE APPROPRIATE CONTRACTUAL ACTION IN COORDINATION WITH THE OFFICE OF CONTRACTING AND PROCUREMENT (OCP). DHS HAS MET WITH OCP TO REVIEW ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN, SHOULD TCP, THROUGH THE ACTIONS OF ITS SUBCONTRACTORS WHO OPERATE SHELTER FACILITIES, FAIL TO FULFILL THE TERMS OF ITS CONTRACT.

AS YOU ARE AWARE, THE OBLIGATION TO MONITOR THE PROVISION OF SERVICES IS INHERENT IN ANY CONTRACTING RELATIONSHIP, AND IS ONE DHS TAKES SERIOUSLY. THAT BEING SAID, IT IS IMPORTANT TO ALLOW AGENCIES THE FLEXIBILITY IN THEIR APPROACHES TO MONITORING THAT ARE NECESSARY TO ENSURE THOSE EFFORTS ARE EFFECTIVE. DHS LOOKS FORWARD TO EXPANDING ITS HOMELESS SERVICE MONITORING ACTIVITIES WITH THE ADDITIONAL STAFF POSITIONS FUNDED IN FY07 AND THANKS THE COMMITTEE FOR ITS LEADERSHIP IN THIS AREA. HOWEVER, I HAVE GRAVE RESERVATIONS

ABOUT THE DETAILED PRESCRIPTION OF MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONTAINED IN THE PROPOSED “HOMELESS SHELTER MONITORING AMENDMENT ACT OF 2006.” LEGISLATING A PROCESS BY WHICH MONITORING IS CARRIED OUT LIMITS AN AGENCY’S FLEXIBILITY TO RESPOND TO EMERGING ISSUES AND DOES NOT UTILIZE THE WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE AMONG SEASONED MANAGERS AND EXPERIENCED SOCIAL WORKERS IN DEVELOPING APPROPRIATE PROTOCOLS. IT IS MY BELIEF THAT THIS AMENDMENT WILL, IN FACT, INHIBIT THE DEPARTMENT’S EFFORTS TO FULFILL ITS INHERENT OBLIGATION TO MONITOR CONTRACT SERVICES AND FORCE US TO FOCUS ON LEGISLATIVELY DEFINED ELEMENTS, RATHER THAN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROTOCOLS THAT ENSURE THE EFFICIENT, EFFECTIVE, AND SAFE DELIVERY OF SERVICES. DHS HAS PREPARED ALTERNATIVE AMENDMENT LANGUAGE TO MORE FULLY ARTICULATE IN THE HSRA THE AGENCY’S MONITORING RESPONSIBILITY AND WOULD BE PLEASED TO DISCUSS THIS ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGE WITH THE COMMITTEE.

AS I MENTIONED PREVIOUSLY, THE MEETING OF THE INTERAGENCY COUNCIL IS TIMELY AND CRITICAL. I AM HOPEFUL THAT IT WILL OFFER GUIDANCE ON MYRIAD ISSUES, INCLUDING HOW TO STRUCTURE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE SERVICES, WHICH SPAN MULTIPLE DISTRICT AGENCIES, ARE SUPPORTED BY MULTIPLE DISTRICT AND FEDERAL FUNDING STREAMS, AND ARE IMPLEMENTED THROUGH NUMEROUS COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS. THE INTERAGENCY COUNCIL’S INPUT REGARDING THE “EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

AMENDMENT ACT OF 2006” WILL BE INVALUABLE, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF THE ADDITIONAL FUNDS GENERATED BY THE DEED AND RECORDATION TAX WHICH ARE DEDICATED TO EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE. I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH THE INTERAGENCY COUNCIL AND THE COMMITTEE AS WE EXPLORE THESE ISSUES MORE FULLY.

FINALLY, DHS FULLY SUPPORTS HSRA AMENDMENT ACT OF 2006. AS I AM SURE YOU ARE AWARE, THE PASSAGE OF THIS AMENDMENT WAS A CONDITION OF MAYOR WILLIAMS’ SIGNATURE ON THIS LEGISLATION AND PROVIDES AN ESSENTIAL AND TIME-LIMITED EXCEPTION TO ALLOW THE USE OF NON-APARTMENT STYLE HOUSING. THE DISTRICT SHARES THE CONCERNS OF THE COUNCIL, ADVOCATES, AND OUR CLIENTS REGARDING THE USE OF D.C. VILLAGE FOR EMERGENCY SHELTER AND IS OF LIKE MIND IN WANTING TO MOVE TOWARD MORE APARTMENT-STYLE HOUSING FOR FAMILIES. AN OVERARCHING AND CRITICAL ISSUE IS LOCATING AND DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVES IN A TIMELY MANNER, AND ALLOCATING THE RESOURCES NECESSARY TO SUPPORT THEIR DEVELOPMENT. WE LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE COUNCIL AND THE INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON THIS ISSUE. REGARDING THIS AMENDMENT, WE THANK THE COMMITTEE FOR HONORING THIS COMMITMENT AND FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE IN DISCUSSIONS OF THESE CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE AREA OF HOMELESS SERVICE PROVISION.



IN SUMMARY, WHILE MUCH WORK REMAINS TO BE DONE, WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT TASKS IN A VERY SHORT TIME. I INTEND FOR THESE STEPS TO BE BUILDING BLOCKS UPON WHICH DHS CAN FURTHER IMPROVE THE PROVISION OF EMERGENCY HOMELESS SHELTER SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT AND OUR STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUDING THE HOMELESS RESIDENTS WE SERVE. THANK YOU AGAIN FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TODAY. I WOULD BE PLEASED TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.